



## Soviet Union

### 30,000 March in Moscow to Honor Putin Critic

People carry Russian national flags as they march with posters reading 'I have no fear, fight!' in Moscow, Russia, Sunday, March 1, 2015, mourning veteran liberal politician Boris Nemtsov. (AP Photo/Denis Tyrin)

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## No clear signs of deal to fund Homeland Security Department



House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio responds to reporters about the impasse over passing the Homeland Security budget during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington. House Republican leaders on Sunday demanded that Democrats begin negotiations on funding for the Homeland Security Department and President Barack Obama's unilateral actions on immigration. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

**KIMBERLY HEFLING**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP) —**

House Republican leaders on Sunday demanded that Democrats begin negotiations on funding for the Homeland Security Department and President Barack Obama's unilateral actions on immigration. Democrats showed no indication they were willing to talk, and some Republicans said the party should simply surrender and give the agency money without conditions.

With a partial shutdown of the department possible at week's end, Speaker John Boehner said the House wants to enter talks with the Senate on a final bill and pointed to Monday's scheduled Senate vote. Congress late Friday cleared a one-week extension for the department after 52 House conservatives defied the Republican leadership and helped scuttle legislation that would have given the agency a three-week reprieve.

"We want to get a conference with the Senate.

Now, they've made clear that they don't want to go to conference. But they're going to have a vote. If they vote, in fact, not to get a conference, this bill may be coming back to the House," Boehner said Sunday on CBS television's "Face the Nation."

Friday's humiliating defeat produced a backlash in the House, with some Republicans criticizing their conservative colleagues and others arguing it was time to fully fund the agency for the year and move on.

Republican Rep. Peter King, a former chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, said Boehner needs to find a way to get a bill to the House floor without the divisive immigration provisions.

"There's no doubt it will pass. ... We cannot allow this small group to block it. Once ... this comes to a vote, we get it behind us, we go forward, then we really, as Republicans, have to stand behind the speaker and make it clear we're not going to allow this faction to be dominating and

to be impeding what we're trying to do," King said.

Conservatives were angered enough by a three-week funding extension with no rollback of the directives Obama signed in November to spare millions of immigrants from deportation and by Democrats insisting on full-year funding to sink the legislation. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi agreed to a one-week extension and

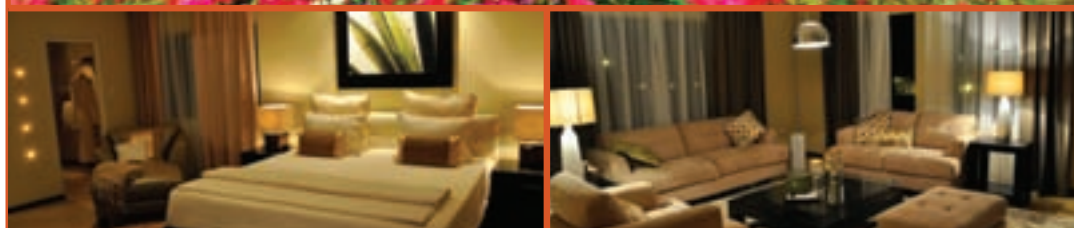
told her Democratic rank-and-file in a letter to back the seven-day extension because, "your vote will assure that we will vote for full funding next week."

Rep. Steve Scalise, the No. 3 House Republican said Sunday there was no such deal. But privately, a senior Democratic congressional aide said Boehner spoke to Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, and committed to bringing up

a bill without conditions. The person spoke anonymously to relate a private conversation.

Boehner on Sunday acknowledged that Friday "wasn't all that fun," but called the House a "ram-bunctious place."

"We have 435 members. A lot of members have a lot of different ideas about what we should and shouldn't be doing," Boehner said. □

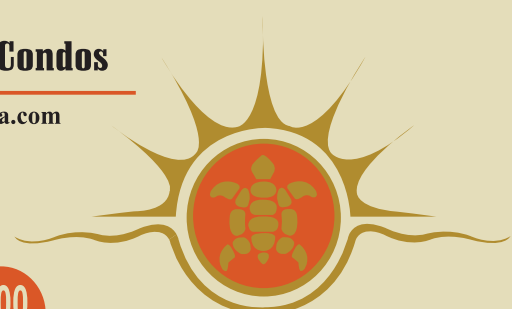


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# Brrr! February brought record cold, snow to US Northeast



Dylan Chestnutt endures wind-whipped snow while walking during a winter storm in single digit temperatures in Portland, Maine. For many cities in the Northeast, it was the coldest February on record, and some places recorded the most days of zero or below temperatures.

(AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty)

**ALBANY, New York (AP)** — Hardy souls who shivered and shoveled their way through February in the U.S.

Northeast now have evidence of just how brutal the weather was, with record cold in seven cities

and record snowfall in Boston.

"We're the standout globally," said Art DeGaetano,

director of the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. "It's colder in Siberia, but we're the farthest below normal." The climate center shows the New York cities of Buffalo, Syracuse, Binghamton and Ithaca had their coldest months ever. The average temperature was 10.9 degrees Fahrenheit (-11.7 degrees Celsius) in Buffalo, beating the 1934 record of 11.4 F (-11.4 Celsius). The normal average temperature for February in Buffalo is 26.3 F (-3.2 C).

The monthly average was 9 F (-12.8 C) in Syracuse, 12.2 F (-11 C) in Binghamton and 10.2 Fahrenheit (-12.1 Celsius) in Ithaca. Syracuse and Ithaca each had 14 days of 0 F (-18 C) or below temperatures, a February record.

There were also February records elsewhere. Record

low average temperatures for the month were set in Hartford, Connecticut, at 16.1 F (-8.8 C); Harrisburg, Pennsylvania at 20.9 F (-6.17 C); and Portland, Maine at 13.8 F (-10.1 C). That's more than 11 degrees Fahrenheit (6 degrees Celsius) below normal for each city. Caribou, Maine's average February temperature of 2.5 degrees F (-16.4 C) was also a record low, DeGaetano said.

Boston's 64.8 inches (164.6 centimeters) of snow easily beat the city's old record of 41.6 inches (105.7 centimeters). If the city gets 5.6 more inches (14.2 more centimeters) before the end of May, it'll be the snowiest winter on record, DeGaetano said. Through Feb. 26, Boston had 102 inches (259.1 centimeters) of snow. Normal is 34 inches (86.4 centimeters). □

## New York City mayor marches in gay pre-St. Patrick's parade



New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, center, waves the flag of Ireland as he marches beside Kerry Kennedy, third from left, during the all-inclusive St. Pat's For All parade in the Sunnyside, Queens neighborhood of New York, Sunday, March 1, 2015.

(AP Photo/Kathy Willens)

**VERENA DOBNIK**  
**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — New York Mayor Bill de Blasio (dih BLAH'-zee-oh) has marched in snow with hundreds of participants at a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender-friendly St. Patrick's Day parade.

He told the gathering Sunday that a society for all is a society that embraces everyone. The parade in Queens is called St. Pat's for All. It's an alternative to the city's centuries-old

St. Patrick's Day Parade in Manhattan, which for years has excluded gay groups. Last year de Blasio skipped the Manhattan parade because it wasn't inclusive — although organizers said last year they'd welcome one gay contingent under its own banner this year. De Blasio calls the crowd Sunday a hardy troupe. He says "that is what pride is all about — pride in the fact that in New York City, you can be whoever you are." □

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## Kerry asks for benefit of the doubt on Iran nuclear talks

BRADLEY KLAPPER

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday tried to calm tensions with Israel before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's congressional address, yet insisted the Obama administration's diplomatic record with Iran entitles the U.S. to "the benefit of the doubt" as negotiators work toward a long-term nuclear deal.

Kerry said in an interview broadcast before he left for more talks in Switzerland with Iran's foreign minister that Netanyahu was welcome to speak in the U.S. and that the administration did not want the event "turned into some great political football."

That sentiment was a step back from some of the sharp rhetoric between the allies in recent weeks, and Kerry mentioned that he had spoken to Netanyahu

as recently as Saturday.

But Kerry stressed that Israel was safer as a result of the short-term nuclear pact that world powers and Iran reached in late 2013, and he described that improvement as the "standard we will apply to any agreement" with Tehran.

Officials have described the United States, Europe, Russia and China as considering a compromise that would see Iran's nuclear activities severely curtailed for at least a decade, with the restrictions and U.S. and Western economic penalties eased in the final years of a deal. "We are going to test whether or not diplomacy can prevent this weapon from being created, so you don't have to turn to additional measures including the possibility of a military confrontation," Kerry told ABC's "This Week."

"Our hope is that diplomacy can work. And I be-



Secretary of State John Kerry pauses as he testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2015. Kerry on Sunday tried to calm tensions with Israel before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's congressional address.

(AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)


lieve, given our success of the interim agreement, we deserve the benefit of the doubt to find out whether or not we can get a similarly good agreement with

respect to the future."

Netanyahu, set to arrive in Washington later Sunday, will press his opposition to a diplomatic accommodation of Iran's program

in a speech Tuesday to Congress. The prime minister says he is making the address out of concern for Israel's security.

The invitation by House Speaker John Boehner, and Netanyahu's acceptance have caused an uproar that has exposed tensions between Israel and the U.S., its most important ally. By consenting to speak, Netanyahu angered the White House, which was not consulted with in advance, and Democrats, who were forced to choose between showing support for Israel and backing the president. "I will do everything in my ability to secure our future," Netanyahu said before flying to Washington. He described himself as "an emissary" of the Jewish people. Boehner said Iran's nuclear ambitions were a threat well beyond the region. □



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# Obama invoking civil rights struggles past and present

**NEDRA PICKLER**  
**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — For President Barack Obama, it will be a week to invoke America's civil rights struggles from past to present. The nation's first black president plans a speech Saturday from the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, the site of one of the civil rights movement's most stirring moments, and will refocus on last year's fatal shooting by a white police officer of an unarmed black 18-year-old in Ferguson, Missouri. Recommendations were expected Monday from the president's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, appointed after Michael Brown's death in August. Attorney General Eric Holder has said he expects to



**President Barack Obama speaks during his meeting with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. In the first week of March Obama plans to invoke America's civil rights struggles from past to present. He due to begin his week Monday by receiving the recommendations of his Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Obama plans to end the week by visiting Selma, Alabama, on Saturday.** (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

announce results of his department's investigation of the case before he leaves office, and that word could come within days.

Obama's actions are an important gesture toward the black community, which strongly backed him in his two White House

changes. The requirement was an effort to stop voting discrimination, mostly in the South. Congress has yet to come up with a new formula.

Since the Supreme Court ruling, some Republican-controlled states have enacted legislation requiring voters to show government-issued photo identification documents claiming it is needed to prevent voter fraud. Opponents contend that such requirements are intended to suppress voting by Democratic-leaning constituencies, including minorities, the elderly, the poor and students.

From the bridge on March 7, 1965, white police officers beat civil rights protesters in 1965. Obama last visited the bridge in 2007 when he was a presidential candidate; this time he is bringing his entire family. "When I take Malia and Sasha down with Michelle next week, down to Selma, part of what I'm hoping to do is to remind them of their own obligations. Because there are going to be marches for them to march, and struggles for them to fight," Obama said at a White House event Thursday celebrating Black History Month.

The Rev. Raphael Warnock, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where the Martin Luther King, Jr., once preached, said voting rights and criminal justice reform were the main topics of a private meeting Obama held with civil rights leaders shortly before his public remarks. "There was agreement in the room that voting rights is crucial, that it is urgent and it ought to be a non-partisan issue," Warnock said.

Warnock decried lawmakers for celebrating Selma's anniversary while failing to restore the Voting Rights Act. In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down the section that determines which states and localities must get Washington's approval for proposed election

changes. The requirement was an effort to stop voting discrimination, mostly in the South. Congress has yet to come up with a new formula.

Since the Supreme Court ruling, some Republican-controlled states have enacted legislation requiring voters to show government-issued photo identification documents claiming it is needed to prevent voter fraud. Opponents contend that such requirements are intended to suppress voting by Democratic-leaning constituencies, including minorities, the elderly, the poor and students.

"The worst assault on voting rights since the Voting Rights Act was passed is happening right now," Warnock said. "You can't celebrate Selma and sit on the reauthorization."

Warnock said Obama's presidency has been a living tribute to the sacrifices of the generation that protested in Selma and elsewhere to promote civil rights. But he argued that a recent discussion among possible 2016 Republican presidential candidates over whether Obama loves his country is one example of how Obama's election has highlighted continuing racism in America.

"I think there are people who still traffic in the narrow alley of bigotry and I think that there are politicians who sell bigotry as a means of elevating their argument or a narrow partisan interest," Warnock said.

Obama's Monday meeting with the police task force follows the three-month deadline he set for recommendations about how police can build trust, accountability and transparency with the communities they serve. □

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## US Financial Front:

# Why the economy is stronger than Q4 GDP suggests



Cynthia Dodd-Simonson shops at a Family Dollar store in Wilmington, N.C. Economists suggest the sharp slowdown in Q4 GDP may be nothing to worry about.

(AP Photo/Matt Born)

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER**  
AP Economics Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. economy grew at a modest annual rate of 2.2 percent in the fourth quarter, less than half the third quarter's torrid 5 percent rate and weaker than the government first reported. While the sharp slowdown seems troubling on the surface, economists say it's actually nothing to worry about. They remain optimistic that the country is finally emerging from years of sub-par activity and is on course this year for the strongest growth in a decade.

Here are five reasons why Friday's gross domestic product report showed that the economy is doing just fine:

### --REALISTIC GROWTH

The sizzling growth rate in the July-September quarter was never going to last. One-time factors, such as a 16 percent surge in federal defense spending, fueled the strongest acceleration in almost a dozen years. The third quarter growth followed a 4.6 percent jump in the second quarter, which was also misleading. That was credited to a robust rebound after harsh winter weather sent the economy into reverse in the first quarter. After such big swings, it's natural that economic growth would settle into a

more sustainable pace.

### --CONSUMER STILL KING

The centerpiece of the fourth quarter's growth was consumer spending, which expanded at a 4.2 percent rate. That was the strongest quarterly growth since early 2006. Consumers benefited from falling gas prices, which gave them more to spend on other items. Consumer spending accounts for 70 percent of economic activity, and economists said the solid performance in the final three months of the year was an encouraging sign going into 2015.

### --BUSINESS SPENDING

Another promising sign emerged from companies. Friday's report revealed that they increased investment spending to expand and modernize their facilities at a solid 4.8 percent rate in the fourth quarter. While that was down from the pace over the previous six months, it was a marked improvement over the government's first estimate that business investment had only risen at a 1.9 percent pace during the three-month period. The robust upward revision eased concerns that businesses might cut back sharply on investment in the face of global economic weakness and a rising dollar, which hurts export sales. Moreover, one

area of weakness in the government's report Friday — a slowdown in business stockpiling — may turn out to be a good thing for the future.

### --JOB GROWTH

While GDP growth slowed in the fourth quarter, the job market was on a roll. The surge continued into January, giving the country the strongest pace of job creation in 17 years — job gains of 423,00 in November, 329,000 in December and 257,000 in January. Hopes for 2015 stem from the theory that strong job growth and falling unemployment will force employers to start boosting salaries to attract workers.

The combination of more jobs and rising salaries is likely to fuel strong consumer spending this year.

### --THE ROAD AHEAD

To be sure, not all the signals are flashing green. The GDP report showed that trade will likely weigh on the economy this year. Imports shot up at a much faster rate than exports, and the wider deficit subtracted 1.1 percentage points from fourth quarter growth. The stronger dollar makes imports cheaper and more attractive to U.S. consumers but dampens demand for U.S. exports. Housing has also lagged in the recovery, though it is expected to strengthen this year. □ A

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# 30,000 March in Moscow to Honor Putin Critic

LAURA MILLS

Associated Press

**MOSCOW (AP)** — For the tens of thousands bearing flowers and tying black ribbons to railings in honor of slain Russian opposition politician Boris Nemtsov, the solemn march through the Moscow drizzle on Sunday was a time for silence, not slogans. The marchers occasionally broke into chants of "Russia without Putin," or "Say no to war," but often the only sound was the steady thwack of police helicopters overhead or the hum of police boats patrolling the shores of the Moscow River. While the killing of Nemtsov has shaken the Russian opposition, which sees the


Kremlin as responsible, it is unclear whether his death will be enough to invigorate the beleaguered movement. Despite the Ukraine conflict and Russia's economic crisis, support for President Vladimir Putin has been above 80 percent in the past year. Since mass anti-Putin protests brought hundreds of thousands to the streets of Moscow in 2011 and 2012, Putin has marginalized and intimidated his political opponents, jailing some, driving others into exile, and ramping up fines and potential jail time for those detained at protests. The 55-year-old Nemtsov was among the few prominent opposition figures who refused to be cowed. But



People march in memory of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov with portraits of him and words reading 'he died for the freedom to Russia, heroes never die!' in Moscow, Russia, Sunday, March 1, 2015.

(AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)

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while many at the march expressed respect for his long political career and grief at his loss, few believed that his death would spark major change in Russia because of the Kremlin's control over national television, where a vast majority of Russians get their news. "Maybe if 100 people were to die people would rise up, but I don't really believe in that," said Sergei Musakov, 22. "People are so under the influence of the (TV) box that they will believe anything that television tells them. If it tells them that terrorists from the Islamic State group came to Russia in order to blow up the fifth column, they'll believe it." The Kremlin had identified Nemtsov as among the leaders of a "fifth column," painting him and other opposition figures as traitors in the service of a hostile West. About 30,000 people attended the march, making it the largest opposition rally in more than a year.

The demonstrators bore Russian flags and signs that read "I am not afraid" or "Propaganda kills." At the site where Nemtsov was killed, a pile of flowers grew by the minute, as mourners tossed down bouquets of every color. Nemtsov was gunned down shortly before midnight Friday as he walked across a bridge near the Kremlin. The killing came just hours after a radio interview in which he denounced Putin's "mad, aggressive policy" in Ukraine. At the time of his death, Nemtsov was working on a report that he believed proved that Russian troops were fighting alongside the separatists in Ukraine, despite the official denials. No one has been arrested in the killing. Investigators said they were looking into several possible motives and have offered 3 million rubles (nearly \$50,000) for information about the shooting.

TV Center, a station controlled by the Moscow city government, broadcast a poor-resolution video from one of its web cameras that it said shows Nemtsov and his date shortly before the killing. The station, which superimposed its own time code on the footage, circled figures that it said were Nemtsov and the woman walking across the bridge on a rainy night. A snowplow that moved slowly behind the couple obscured the view of the shooting. TV Center then circled what it said was the suspected killer jumping into a passing car. The authenticity of the video could not be independently confirmed. Investigators said Sunday they were again questioning the woman, Ukrainian citizen Anna Duritskaya. Russian media have identified her as a model and shown photos of her in alluring poses. □



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Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday for his first policy meeting with the country's king ahead of a conference aimed at shoring up financial support from wealthy Gulf states for Egypt's battered economy. A Saudi official told The Associated Press the two leaders discussed el-Sissi's proposal for a joint anti-terrorism force to tackle regional threats, particularly from Yemen, Libya and Syria. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release the information.

In an interview with the pan-Arab Al-Arabiya news channel broadcast this weekend, el-Sissi said the force would not be used for attacking "but for defending the security of our countries."

He said Jordan has expressed interest in creating such a force, which could include Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Egyptian troops already are deployed on Saudi Arabia's border with Iraq to help defend it against radical militants, according to Egyptian military and security officials.

King Salman and other royals greeted el-Sissi at the airport. El-Sissi spent roughly four hours in the kingdom, a key organizer of the investment conference scheduled to take place later this month in Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh.

It marks the first meeting for the two since audio was leaked in February of el-Sissi allegedly poking fun at the Gulf's immense oil wealth and saying "money there is like rice." Members of his inner circle also purportedly



Saudi King Salman, right, stands with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi during his arrival ceremony at Riyadh Airbase, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Sunday, March 1, 2015. El-Sissi visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday for his first policy meeting with the country's king ahead of a conference aimed at shoring up financial support from wealthy Gulf states for Egypt's battered economy. (AP Photo/SPA)

derided Gulf countries as "half-states" and said they need Egypt's help to defend themselves.

Egyptian authorities say the tapes were fabricated by ousted President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood group. El-Sissi was last in Saudi Arabia in January to offer condolences after the death of King Abdullah. Under Abdullah's rule, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations gave Egypt billions of dollars in aid after el-Sissi, then a military general, overthrew Morsi in 2013. Salman is scheduled to meet Monday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a strong critic of Egypt's Brotherhood crackdown. El-Sissi criticized Turkey in his Al-Arabiya interview, saying it "needed to halt its interference in Egypt." □

## Activists say Islamic State releases 19 Syrian Christians

RYAN LUCAS

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP)

— The Islamic State group released at least 19 Christians on Sunday who were among the more than 220 people the militants took captive in northeastern Syria last week, activists and a local leader said.

The news provided a modicum of relief to a Christian Assyrian community that has been devastated by the abductions, which saw Islamic State fighters haul off entire families from a string of villages along the Khabur River in Hassakeh province. But fears remain over the fate of the hundreds still held captive.

Bashir Saedi, a senior official in the Assyrian Democratic Organization, said the 16 men and three women arrived safely Sunday at the Church of the Virgin Mary in the city of Hassakeh. He said the 19 — all of them

from the village of Tal Ghoran — had traveled by bus from the Islamic State-held town of Shaddadeh south of Hassakeh.

The Assyrian Human Rights Network also reported the release, and published photographs on its Facebook page that it said were from Hassakeh showing a crowd dressed in winter coats greeting the returnees.

The photos appeared genuine and corresponded to Associated Press reporting. It was not immediately clear why the Islamic State group freed these captives.

Saedi said all those released were around 50 years of age or older, which suggests age might have been a factor. The Assyrian Human Rights Network, meanwhile, said the captives had been ordered released by a Shariah court after paying

an unspecified amount of money levied as a tax on non-Muslims.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also said a Shariah court had ruled the captives be freed, but the reasoning behind the decision was unknown.

The fate of the more than 200 other Christian Assyrians still in the Islamic State group's hands remains unclear. Most of them are believed to have been taken by Islamic State fighters to Shaddadeh, which is located 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of Hassakeh. Assyrian leaders and Sunni tribal sheikhs have begun reaching out to the Islamic State group to try to negotiate the release of the captives, activists said.

"We're trying to contact any party that might help. We're working through our friends the tribal sheikhs," said Younan Talia, a se-

nior official in the Assyrian Democratic Organization. "Some friends of Daesh are trying to send messages." Talia said there has been no response yet. Daesh is an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group.

The Sweden-based director of the Assyrian Network for Human Rights in Syria, Osama Edward, also said efforts were underway to try to negotiate the captives' release.

The abductions have added to fears among religious minorities in both Syria and Iraq, who have been repeatedly targeted by the Islamic State group. During the militants' bloody campaign in both countries, where they have declared a self-styled caliphate, minorities have been repeatedly targeted and killed, driven from their homes, had their women enslaved and places of worship destroyed. □



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## Iraqi premier gives ultimatum ahead of hinted Tikrit attack

**SAMEER N. YACIOUB**

**Associated Press**

**BAGHDAD (AP)** — Iraq's prime minister called on Sunni tribal fighters to abandon the Islamic State group Sunday, ahead of a promised offensive to retake Saddam Hussein's hometown from the extremists. Haider al-Abadi offered no timeline for an attack on Tikrit, the hometown of the late Iraqi dictator some 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Baghdad that fell into the hands of the Islamic State group last summer. However, Shiite militias

and Iraqi security forces have stationed themselves around Tikrit as state-run media has warned that the city "will soon return to its people." But sending Shiite militias into the Sunni city of Tikrit, the capital of Iraq's Salahuddin province, could reprise the bloody, street-by-street insurgent battles that followed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. On Saturday, two suicide car bombers killed 16 nearby Shiite militiamen and wounded 31. Al-Abadi offered what he called "the last chance"



**Shiite militiamen guard the funeral procession of Mohammed Radin, 19, a soccer player for a local sports club who was killed in a car bomb attack in Baghdad's southeastern suburb of Jisr Diyala, Iraq.**  
(AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed)

for Sunni tribal fighters, promising them a pardon during a news conference in Samarra, 95 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad. His office said he arrived in Samarra to "supervise the operation to liberate Tikrit from the terrorist gangs." "I call upon those who have been misled or com-

mitted a mistake to lay down arms and join their people and security forces in order to liberate their cities," al-Abadi said. Al-Abadi said the operation will see troops come from several directions, but he declined to give an exact time for the operation's start. However, his presence in Samarra sug-

gests it could come soon. A statement from his office late Sunday announced the start of a security operation to "liberate" Salahuddin province, though there were no initial reports of any military action underway. The Iraqi military previously launched an operation in late June to try to wrest back control of Tikrit, but that quickly stalled after making little headway. Other planned offensives by Iraq's military, which collapsed under the initial Islamic State group blitz, also have failed to make up ground, though soldiers have taken back the nearby refinery town of Beiji, backed by airstrikes from a U.S.-led coalition. Tikrit, which occasionally saw attacks on U.S. forces during the American occupation of the country, is one of the biggest cities held by the Islamic State group. □

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ARUBA WINE TIDINE

## Brazil nabs US sect leader wanted over sex charges

BRAD BROOKS  
AMY FORLITI  
Associated Press

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** — Brazilian authorities said Saturday they arrested a self-professed minister put on a U.S. most-wanted list for allegedly molesting two girls in a "Maidens Group" at his religious fellowship in rural Minnesota.

A statement posted on the website of the Public Security Secretariat for the Rio Grande do Norte state government reported the arrest of Victor Arden Barnard, 53. The U.S. Marshals Service also confirmed the arrest in a statement.

The Brazilian statement said police captured Barnard late Friday in an apartment near a paradisiacal white-sand beach in northeastern Brazil. He was being held in the city of Natal to await extradition to face charges in the U.S.

Barnard, who faces 59 counts of criminal sexual conduct, was on the most-wanted list of the U.S. Marshals Service. According to a criminal complaint in the U.S., two women said they were among about 10 girls and young women who were chosen to

live apart from their families in a camp that Barnard set up near Finlayson, Minnesota, about 90 miles north of Minneapolis.

One woman alleged Barnard sexually abused her beginning at age 13 and continuing until she was 22. The other said her abuse occurred between ages 12 and 20. Barnard allegedly kept the girls isolated, and U.S. authorities have said he used religious coercion and intimidation to maintain his control over them, calling it cult-like behavior. He allegedly told one victim she would remain a virgin because he was a "man of God," according to a criminal complaint. Investigators believe Barnard abused other girls but have been unable to get others to come forward. Most of the criminal counts against him carry maximum sentences of 30 years in prison.

Cindi Currie, who said she had visited Barnard's River Road Fellowship religious camp in Minnesota years ago and tried to persuade a friend to leave the group, told the Minneapolis Star Tribune newspaper that she can't wait to see Barnard behind bars. □

## Caricom to study implications of legalizing use of marijuana

**NASSAU, Bahamas (AP)** — A Caribbean trade bloc says it will form a commission to analyze the social, economic, health and legal impact of decriminalizing marijuana use. The announcement comes as Caricom awaits a report on how medical marijuana could help boost the region's economy. The report is scheduled to be released in February 2016. Barbados Prime Minister Freundel Stuart said Friday

that leaders would not be rushed into a decision. He spoke at a two-day Caricom summit held in the Bahamas. Earlier this week, Jamaica's Parliament approved a bill that decriminalizes small amounts of pot and establishes a licensing agency to regulate a lawful medical marijuana industry. Activists in St. Lucia and other Caribbean islands have been pushing to legalize marijuana use. □



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro, right, and his wife Cilia Flores greet supporters during a rally outside of Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela. Venezuelans took to the streets of Caracas in dueling demonstrations this weekend, with one group calling attention to a crackdown on opponents of the government and another showing support for the embattled socialist administration. (AP Photo/Fernando Llano)

## US officials mock Venezuela travel ban

HANNAH DREIER  
Associated Press  
CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Conservative U.S. politicians banned from traveling to Venezuela by socialist President Nicolas Maduro are taking the restriction as a badge of honor.

Maduro laid out a series of measures against U.S. diplomats and tourists Saturday night, including a promise to limit the size of the embassy here and impose a tourist visa requirement.

Maduro also gave a list of conservative U.S. officials who would be barred from entering Venezuela. He named former President George W. Bush, former Vice President Dick Cheney and several congressmen. "They can't come to Venezuela because they're terrorists," Maduro said before a crowd that had gathered to protest imperialism. "Out of here, terrorists."

Florida Rep. Ileana Ros-

Lehtinen said on Twitter that she was proud to be listed among such "good company." Another Florida Republican, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, responded with faux disappointment. "I've always wanted to travel to a corrupt country that is not a free democracy. And now Castro's lapdog won't let me!" he wrote on Twitter.

Some high-profile critics of the Maduro administration took the new ban as opportunity to slam the administration. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., said in a statement that he didn't need to come to Caracas to work against the regime. "No matter where I am, I will continue exposing the murders, human rights abuses and economic disaster that Nicolas Maduro and his regime are responsible for in Venezuela," he said. Similarly, Sen. Bob Menendez, a Democrat from New

Jersey, vowed that the ban would have no effect on his willingness to speak out against the Maduro government.

The U.S. recently imposed a travel ban on a list of top Venezuelan officials accused of human rights violations.

Foreign Relations Minister Delcy Rodriguez said Sunday she would work to put the new regulations in place quickly, and added that the new visa restriction was a question of fairness.

"It's nothing unusual. Venezuelans have to pay in dollars just to apply for a visa to go to the U.S., even if they're not granted one," she said. Maduro suggested Saturday that he could squeeze the number of U.S. functionaries permitted in Venezuela from a hundred people down to just a handful, a move which could complicate the processing of tourist visas for Venezuelans. □



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## Vazquez replaces folksy Mujica as Uruguay president

**L. HABERKORN**  
**Associated Press**

**MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (AP)** — One leftist leader replaced another in Uruguay on Sunday, a change seemingly marked more by style than differences in policy as the elegant Tabare Vazquez took over

from the famously casual Jose Mujica, who formally left office in rubber-soled brown shoes. Vazquez, a 75-year-old oncologist who was president from 2005 to 2010, has said he will allow the government to proceed with one of Mujica's most controver-

sial initiatives, the world's first state-run marijuana marketplace, though he said he will change it if it has negative results. The new president urged Uruguayans to work together to improve public education, health and housing, and he decried

the violence haunting the world beyond. "Seldom in history has humanity been so shaken, so beaten, so overwhelmed as in these times. Violence, fear, terror, intolerance stalk different regions of our planet," he said in his inaugural address.

Vazquez shook up Uruguayan politics when he became president the first time, peacefully ending 170 years of two-party dominance. But he governed as a relatively cautious moderate and left office with approval ratings of about 70 percent. □

## Popular Peru ex-minister charged in killing of journalist

**LIMA, Peru (AP)** — A retired army general widely seen as a possible presidential candidate has been charged with murdering a journalist during the country's conflicts 26 years ago, a prosecutor announced. Luis Landa said in interviews published Sunday by three newspapers that he is seeking a 25-year prison term for former Interior Minister Daniel Urresti based on evidence that, as local army intelligence chief at the time, he was responsible for the murder of Hugo Bustios. Bustios was a correspondent for the national magazine Carretas in the highlands town of Huanta. He was shot and then finished off with a grenade while investigating rights abuses in November 1988 at a time when the government was trying to stamp out a rebellion by the leftist Shining



**Peru's Interior Minister Daniel Urresti talks with the press during the presentation of seized drugs at a police base in Lima, Peru. Urresti, a former army general, has been charged with murdering a journalist during the country's conflicts 26 years ago, prosecutor Luis Landa announced. (AP Photo/Martin Mejia)**

Path guerrillas. Landa did not return repeated telephone messages left on his cellphone on Sunday. Nor did chief prosecutor Pablo Sanchez.

In Twitter posts, Urresti said he is innocent and he called the accusation politically motivated. President Ollanta Humala, himself a retired soldier, also suggested the charges could be political, saying they came just as Urresti was joining the governing Nationalist Party. Urresti, 58, was the government's most popular minister before being replaced last month. He is widely seen as a potential contender in 2016 presidential elections. Two officers have already been sentenced to 15 years in prison for the killing of Bustios. One of them, Amador Vidal, earlier accused Urresti of involvement. According to a government-backed Truth Commission, some 70,000 people died during the conflict that lasted from 1980 to 2000. □

## Venezuela objects to oil exploration off coast of Guyana

**BERT WILKINSON**  
**Associated Press**

**GEORGETOWN, Guyana (AP)** — Guyana said Sunday that neighboring Venezuela is objecting to oil exploration in contested waters off the smaller South American country's coast. There has been a decades-long territorial dispute between South America's biggest oil producer and sparsely populated Guy-

ana, one of the region's poorest nations. Guyana's foreign affairs ministry said that Caracas objects to plans for an exploratory well to be drilled in an area it contends is within Guyana's territorial waters. A subsidiary of U.S.-based Exxon Mobil Corp plans to conduct exploratory drilling later this month under a Guyana concession. Guyana said it is request-

ing that Venezuela "desist from taking any actions that could only result in the stymieing of the development of Guyana." Venezuela has for decades claimed two-thirds of Guyana's territory as its own, arguing that the gold-rich region west of the Essequibo River was stolen from it by an 1899 agreement with Britain and its then-colony. The area, roughly the size of

the U.S. state of Georgia, is often shown in 19th-century maps of Gran Colombia, the short-lived republic revered by the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez. Chavez's successor, Nicolas Maduro, has previously described the dispute as a relic of the colonial era and vowed to peacefully resolve the issue in accordance with international law. But the issue is not going away.

About two years ago, a ship conducting a seismic study for Texas-based Anadarko Petroleum Corp. under a concession from Guyana was detained by Venezuela. Guyana said the ship and its 36-man crew, including five Americans and workers from Russia, Indonesia and Brazil, were well within its territorial waters at the time. The vessel was released after a week. □





At La Cabana Beach Resort:

## Glitz Casino Celebrates Chinese Lunar New Year in Style!



**EAGLE BEACH** - The Glitz Casino at La Cabana Beach Resort celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year with members of the local Chinese community as well as with Casino guests from Aruba and abroad. Everyone playing in the casino during the celebration last week

enjoyed the music, ambiance and of course casino specials presented for the occasion, especially our Dancing Chinese Dragons. Mr. Dennis Zeppenfeld made sure that the music, decorations and ambiance was superior for the occasion, especially in the Glitz Casino's Liquid

Lounge. In the photos you can see the fun come to life!

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## Mrs. Alice Kramer Honored at the Radisson Aruba Resort



**PALM BEACH** - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a loyal and friendly guest at the Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino, & Spa as a Distinguished Visitor of Aruba. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name

of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 consecutive years. The honoree is Mrs. Alice Kramer, resident of New York. Mrs. Kramer is a loyal visitor of the Radisson and what keeps her coming back to Aruba is the feeling of being at home on vacation. She enjoys the quiet sound of the Caribbean sea while laying on the beach under her Palapa, the wonderful dining and the beautiful people she has met over the years. The certificates were presented by Ms. Darline S. de Cuba representing

the Aruba Tourism Authority together with General Manager Mr. Mark Lyttleton-Frances and Guest Relations Manager Mrs. Germaine Wever, representing the Radisson Hotel, and Mr. Fernando Mansur of House of Mosaic. Alice has her own business called Discerning Designs - Unique Jewelry Creations by Alice K. Her designs are one-of-a-kind pieces of jewelry focusing on exotic colored gems and diamonds set in 18K and platinum. Her first piece was made in Aruba in 2001, assisted by Michael Douglas. Now she works with Fernando Mansur of House of Mosaic where her pieces can be viewed. □

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Sidebar's signature burgers have been named The Sidebar, The Afterburner, The Goliath, The Texan, The Chaser, The Primal and The Italian Job and we are sure that everyone will be able to find a burger that calls out to them. The burgers come with brie cheese, prosciutto, Cheddar cheese, zucchini, sliced steak, Bourbon bbq sauce, dripping gravy and much more, depending on your order. The best thing is that these gourmet beauties cost less than \$ 15.--, so lunch or an evening out won't break the bank.

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Wash your lunch or dinner down with a premium, aged Bourbon or try the ice-cold beers on tap to slake your thirst. You can choose between Heineken, Balashi, Chill, Stella Artois, Miller Light or Presidente. Come inside, at the bar or sit outside on the terrace; at Sidebar there will always be a place for you.



Picture: "THE TEXAN" GOURMET BURGER

## Loyal Visitors Honored at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort



**PALM BEACH** - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill. The



symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as tokens of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 and 20-to-34 consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Robert Anselmo of Bloom-



ingdale, Illinois, and Mr. Michael and Mrs. Candy Jordan of Fenton, Michigan. All the honorees are loyal members of the Divi Phoenix and they love Aruba very much be-

cause of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restaurants, Casinos and Aruba feels like a second home. The people are like a family to them and the Divi Phoenix is their home

away from home. The certificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Mrs. Avril representing the Divi Phoenix. □





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beat or spilling a drop! The combination of location, cool vibes, live music 4 nights a week, happy hour entertainment, and the interaction between staff and guests has not gone unnoticed. Both Endless Vacation and Cruise-line Magazine named Bugaloe as a top 10 best

beach bars in the Caribbean. In the words of The Huffington Post: "Bugaloe is a sexy locale right on the water with that true sense-of-place feel". Reservations are not necessary- just follow your tapping feet down to the music where smiles and fun await you! ☐



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Knaus hold up the trophy after winning the NASCAR Sprint Cup auto race at Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, Ga., Sunday, March 1, 2015.  
Associated Press

## Jimmie Johnson pulls away for another Atlanta Sprint Cup win

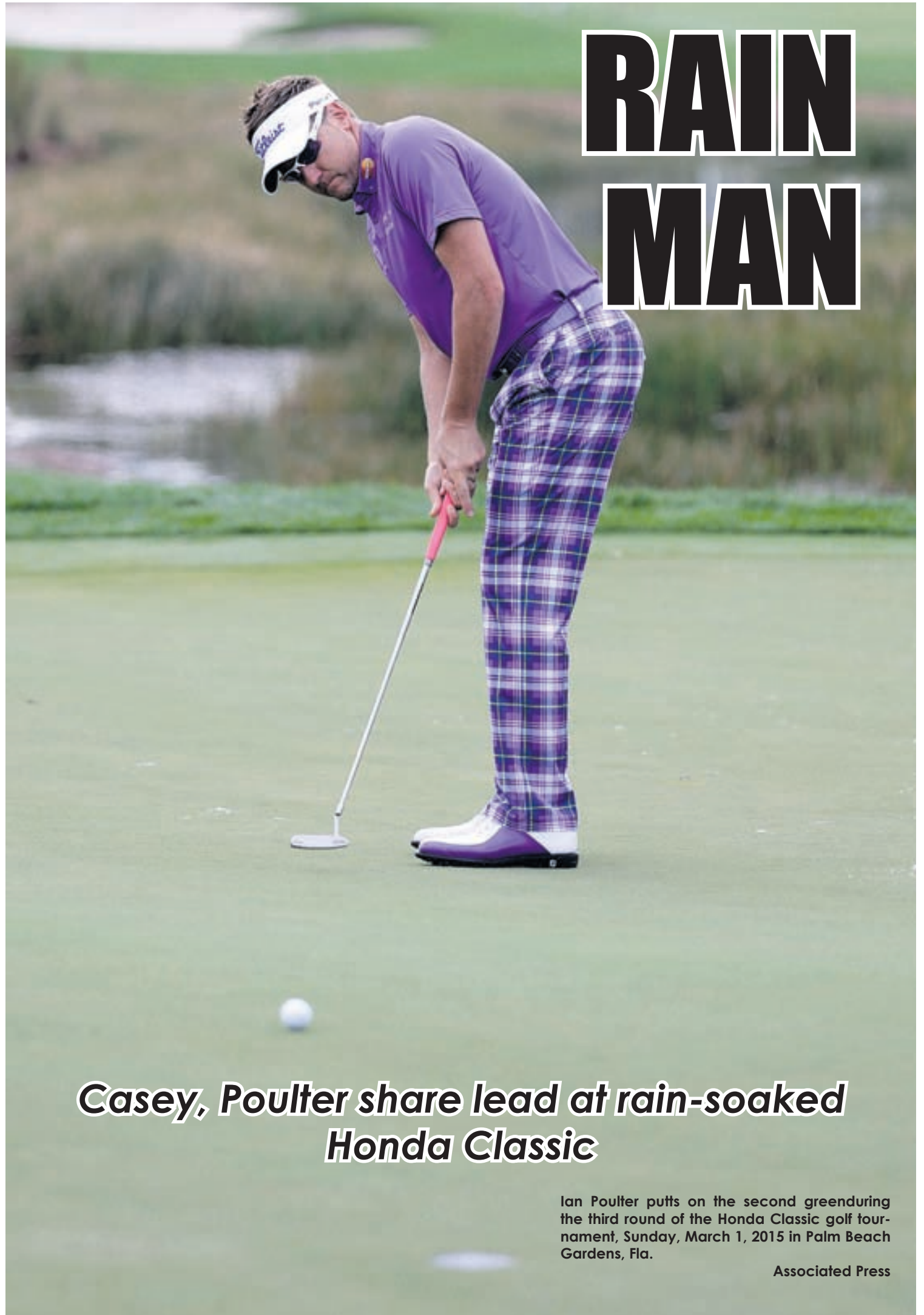
**PAUL NEWBERRY**  
AP Sports Writer

HAMPTON, Ga. (AP) — Likely locking up a run at his record-tying seventh championship before it even turns to spring, Jimmie Johnson pulled away after the final restart with 13 laps to go Sunday, winning the NASCAR Sprint Cup race at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Johnson started near the back after failing to get in a qualifying run because of inspection issues. But the No. 48 Chevrolet was the fastest car on the track at the end of the weekend, cruising across the finish line a comfortable 1.803 seconds ahead of Kevin Harvick.

It was the 71st victory of Johnson's career, and his fourth at the 1.54-mile trioval south of Atlanta. It also gives him an almost-certain spot in the season-ending Chase, going for a title that would tie him with Richard Petty and the late Dale Earnhardt.

Continued on Page 19



## Casey, Poulter share lead at rain-soaked Honda Classic

Ian Poulter putts on the second green during the third round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Sunday, March 1, 2015 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press



# Poulter, Casey share lead at rain-delayed Honda Classic

**DOUG FERGUSON**

**AP Golf Writer**

**PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla.**

**(AP)** — Ian Poulter didn't realize he had a three-shot lead in the Honda Classic, only that he was playing well enough to feel like he was in control of his game and the tournament.

One shank changed everything Sunday.

"That just came out of left field," Poulter said.

His next tee shot that splashed down in the water left of the fairway made it even worse.

"It was a bit of a body blow," he said.

What had been a marathon day at soggy PGA National suddenly turned into a sprint-to-the-finish on Monday morning when the final round was to resume.



**Ian Poulter hits from the second tee during the third round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Sunday, March 1, 2015 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.**

Poulter lost command of the Honda Classic, but he didn't lose his place atop the leaderboard.

**Associated Press**

He was at 7-under par through seven holes, tied with Paul Casey, who went out in 31 and was in the left rough on the 10th hole when the final round was halted at sunset.

Patrick Reed, in the final group with Poulter, was one shot behind.

Phil Mickelson was among four players who were three shots behind at 4-under par. That group included Daniel Berger, the PGA Tour rookie from West Palm Beach whose final shot Sunday was a 35-foot chip-in for birdie on the 11th hole.

"I'm pretty pleased with the golf I've played throughout the whole of today," Poulter said. "I haven't really made many mistakes at all. I've put it in position an awful lot, which is encouraging right now. And if I do that tomorrow, then I'm going to be in a good position."

His two mistakes were big ones.

Leading by three shots, he tried to take a little off an 8-iron on the par-3 fifth hole, where the green is guarded by water on the left. Poulter hit a shank that went so far to the right it bounced into water on the sixth hole. He made double bogey and lost the lead.

On his next tee shot, he pulled his drive into the water down the left side of the sixth fairway and had to two-putt from 65 feet to

escape with bogey.

"You take your foot off the accelerator for one second, all of a sudden you find yourself completely out of position," Poulter said.

For a day of plodding across the rain-softened fairways, the Honda Classic suddenly was full of energy, not to mention possibilities. There was a three-shot swing at No. 5 when Reed holed a 35-foot birdie putt from a swale right of the fifth green and Poulter made his double bogey. Reed took the lead on No. 6 when Poulter made bogey.

And then Poulter was on the right end of a two-shot swing at their final hole of the long day, the par-3 seventh.

His eyes a little wider, his blood boiling, Poulter drilled a 6-iron into 3 feet for birdie, while Reed missed the green to the left and failed to get up-and-down.

No longer forgotten was Casey, who made four birdies on the front nine, all from no more than 12 feet. His birdie on No. 9 moved him into a share of the lead.

The Monday finish was caused by nearly 5 inches of rain and 50 mph gusts that washed out the third round on Saturday and took a 78-member grounds crew until 10 a.m. Sunday just to get the course ready. It had so much water that the crew had to chase off an alligator from the bunkers. Players finished the third round and went right back out to squeeze in as many holes as possible. The final round was to resume at 8 a.m.

"This sort of situation is going to be difficult for everybody, and it just breaks up momentum," said Casey, who had more than anyone. "Some guys will carry it through tomorrow. Others won't, and that's very difficult to predict. ...You just hope you wake up tomorrow and you feel like you've got the same kind of golf swing and putts are going in the hole. You just don't know. □





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Continued from Page 17

## Jimmie Johnson

"It's pretty much a lock," Johnson said. "That takes a ton of pressure off."

Dale Earnhardt Jr. was third, followed by Daytona 500 winner Joey Logano, who started from the pole and led 84 laps early in the race.

After a big crash on lap 305 brought out the red flag for 9 minutes to clean up the mess, Johnson found himself at the front of the pack. When the green flag waved, he got a good jump off the line, fended off Hendrick Motorsports teammate Earnhardt going down the backstretch, and was firmly in control by the time the cars came back around in front of the stands. There was no catching him from there. Johnson was among four former champions, along with teammate Jeff Gordon, Tony Stewart and Matt Kenseth, who never got on the track during qualifying. Thirteen cars were stuck in

the garage after failing to pass inspection, a situation that Gordon called "embarrassing" for the sport.

Harvick, who qualified on the outside of the front row, also was sent to the back of the field after blowing an engine during Saturday's practice. He quickly worked his way through slower cars, got to the front and dominated long stretches of the race, leading a race-high 116 laps.

For much of the day, it was clean race despite a new rules package for non-restrictor plate races, which reduced horsepower and drag while giving drivers a device to adjust the car's balance during the race. The first big crash came on lap 258, taking out Gordon, Denny Hamlin and Jamie McMurray. Then, on lap 305, Greg Biffle clipped Joe Nemechek going into the third turn, gobbling up four other cars and bringing out the red flag.

Hamlin started a four-car melee when he got sideways coming out of turn two off a restart. Gordon took the biggest blow, sliding off the inside of the track and smashing into an exposed inside wall — just beyond a SAFER barrier that would've eased the blow.

Track officials had increased the amount of padding in Atlanta after Kyle Busch smashed head-first into an unprotected wall during an Xfinity Series race in Daytona, leaving him with a broken right leg and left foot. Busch missed his second straight Cup race, recovering at home while substitute David Ragan finished 18th in the No. 18 car, two laps down.

There are still spots at every track where drivers can take a hard hit, an issue that will surely lead to calls for NASCAR to take additional safety measures.

"It wasn't going to be too bad, but I found the one spot where there's no SAFER barrier," said Gordon,



Jimmie Johnson (48) drives through Turn 4 during the NASCAR Sprint Cup series auto race at Atlanta Motor Speedway, Sunday, March 1, 2015, in Hampton, Ga.

Associated Press

who wasn't injured. "I can't believe that. Hopefully, soon, they'll get that fixed." Newman was the only driver in the crash able to continue. Hamlin, who led 14 laps, took the blame. "I apologize to all those cars involved," he said. "I just lost the handle on that last run."

Gordon was making his final appearance at Atlanta, the track where he began his Cup career at the end of the 1992 season. The four-time champion, who plans to retire at the end of the season, is off to a rough start in his farewell tour after winning the pole for the Daytona 500. □



# Nadal beats Monaco to win 1st title in nearly 9 months

**BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP)** — Rafael Nadal won his first title in nearly nine months Sunday after defeating Juan Monaco 6-4, 6-1 at the Argentina Open. The top-seeded Spaniard hadn't reached a final since winning at Roland Garros last year.

It was Nadal's 46th title on clay, moving him within three of the record set by Argentine Guillermo Vilas when he played in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Nadal broke Monaco's serve late in the first set to take a 1-0 lead against the 60th-ranked Argentine, then dominated the second to close out the match in 1 hour, 26 minutes.

Rain delayed and interrupted the match in Buenos Aires. "It was a complicated day for everybody," Nadal said. "Both for me and (Monaco) but especially for the fans who had to wait." □



Rafael Nadal, of Spain, bites his trophy after winning the final tennis match at the ATP Argentina Open against Juan Monaco, of Argentina, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Sunday, March 1, 2015.

Associated Press

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## Fast and furious: Rousey looks to future after 14-second win

**GREG BEACHAM**  
AP Sports Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Ronda Rousey won a fight in 16 seconds last summer, falling a second short of the quickest victory in UFC history. At the time, the bantamweight champion figured the speed with which she pummeled Alexis Davis was a fluke.

"It's something everybody on my team was teasing me about, but I wasn't taking seriously," Rousey said. "I didn't seriously think I could top it."

Just about anything seems possible these days for mixed martial arts' most dominant champion.

Rousey (11-0) needed just 14 electrifying seconds to finish off Cat Zingano at UFC 184 on Saturday night in her hometown. Not only was it the fastest finish ever in a UFC title bout, it was the quickest submission victory in the promotion's several thousand bouts of history. The search for a worthy opponent will take much longer.

Rousey is a bona fide superstar after selling out Staples Center and attracting what's expected to be a solid pay-per-view audience, but the UFC is facing a problem finding opponents who can be sold to the world as having a chance to contend with her otherworldly skills.

"Yeah, we're going to move her to the men's division and see the odds," UFC President Dana White said with a laugh. "I don't

know what to do with this lady."

Zingano (9-1) was considered the most daunting threat to Rousey's title reign, with more skill, toughness and pertinent experience than most of Rousey's previous victims. But her curious decision to charge right into the grasp of an Olympic medal-winning judoka doomed her before many fans had even sat down.

When the wonder finally subsided, Rousey and White speculated on what's next for one of the promotion's biggest stars.

White faced a barrage of questions at the post-fight news conference about Cris "Cyborg" Justino, the Brazilian veteran and former Strikeforce champ currently dominating the all-women Invicta promotion at 145 pounds. Justino was widely considered the world's best female fighter before she failed a doping test and Rousey rose to the pinnacle.

Both fighters have said they're eager to face off, but Justino — a target of Rousey's ridicule for that doping failure — fights at 145 pounds, and has been inconsistent about whether she could make the 135-pound bantamweight limit. Justino looked big on Friday night when she won her latest Invicta fight in Los Angeles, several blocks down Figueroa Street from Staples Center.

While hard-core fans have clamored for Rousey to

move up to a catch weight to make the fight, White sees no reason why Rousey would make concessions for anyone.

"Why would the champ go there?" White asked. "It just doesn't make sense. The champ doesn't (compromise for) other people. ... If (Justino) makes the weight, she can make the fight. She looked nowhere near 135 (Friday) night."

Justino is expected to fight again in the summer, per-



**Ronda Rousey gets ready to fight Cat Zingano in a UFC 184 mixed martial arts bantamweight title bout, Saturday, Feb. 28, 2015, in Los Angeles.**  
Associated Press

haps at 135 pounds. If she limit, a bout with Rousey makes the bantamweight could happen soon. □

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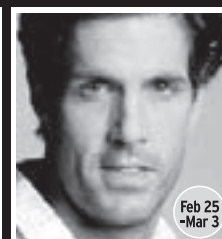
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# Major league baseball's 1st black Latino star Minoso dies



In a Aug. 24, 2013 file photo, former Negro Leaguer and Chicago White Sox player Minnie Minoso stands during the national anthem before a baseball game between the Chicago White Sox and the Texas Rangers, in Chicago.

Associated Press

**JAY COHEN**

**AP Sports Writer**

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Minnie Minoso, the seemingly ageless Cuban slugger who broke into the majors just two years after Jackie Robinson and turned into the game's first black Latino star, has died, a medical examiner in Illinois said Sunday.

The Cook County medical examiner's office did not immediately offer further details. There is some question about Minoso's age but the Chicago White Sox say he was 90.

Minoso played 12 of his 17 seasons in Chicago, hitting .304 with 135 homers and 808 RBIs for the White Sox. The White Sox retired his No. 9 in 1983 and there is a statue of Minoso at U.S. Cellular Field.

"We have lost our dear friend and a great man," White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf said in a release. "Many tears are falling."

Minoso made his major league debut with Cleveland in 1949 and was dealt to the White Sox in a three-team trade two years later. He became major league baseball's first black player in Chicago on May 1, 1951, and homered in his first plate appearance against Yankees right-hander Vic Raschi.

It was the start of a beautiful relationship between the slugger and the White

Sox. Minoso, regarded as baseball's first black Latino star, was a Havana native who spent most of his career in left field. He is one of only two players to appear in a major league game in five different decades. He got his final hit in 1976 at age 53 and went 0 for 2 in two games in 1980 for the White Sox, who tried unsuccessfully over the years to get the "Cuban Comet" into baseball's Hall of Fame.

"When I watched Minnie Minoso play, I always thought I was looking at a Hall of Fame player," Reinsdorf said in an informational package produced by the team for a 2011 Cooperstown push. "I never understood why Minnie wasn't elected."

"He did everything. He could run, he could field, he could hit with power, he could bunt and steal bases. He was one of the most exciting players I have ever seen." Saturnino Orestes Armas Minoso Arrieta was selected for nine All-Star games and won three Gold Gloves in left. He was hit by a pitch 192 times, ninth on baseball's career list, and finished in the top four in AL MVP voting four times.

Despite the push by the White Sox and other prominent Latin players, Minoso has never made it to Cooperstown. His highest percentage during his 15 years

on the writers' ballot was 21.1 in 1988. He was considered by the Veterans Committee in 2014 and fell short

of the required percentage for induction.

"My last dream is to be in Cooperstown, to be with

those guys," Minoso said in that 2011 package distributed by the White Sox. "I want to be there.□"



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## Google's Blogger reverses porn policy after user backlash

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Apparently Google bloggers like to post porn. A lot.

Just three days after saying sexually explicit material would be banned from public Blogger forum sites, Google is backing down. Faced with "a ton of feedback," Google said Friday that it instead will "step up enforcement" against commercial and illegal porn.

Google spokeswoman Katie Watson said the company does not disclose how many Blogger users it has nor how many of them would have been affected by the policy change. On Tuesday, Google warned Bloggers that effective March 23 any site hosting nude pictures would be switched to private mode — only available to the authors and invited viewers. That ban came the same day that social forum and news site Reddit said it would remove explicit photos, videos and links if the person pictured hadn't consented to the image being posted.

In an online post Friday, Google's Blogger said longtime users thought it was unfair to suddenly change the policy. The company also was swayed by users who say posting sexually explicit content

This Jan. 3, 2013, file photo shows a Google sign at the company's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif.

Associated Press

is part of expressing their identities.

Sexually explicit content on Blogger will still be marked by an "adult content" warning. And Google's Blogger policy does not allow users to post nudes or sexually explicit images of someone else without that person's consent.

Mountain View, California-based Google Inc. bought Blogger in 2003. It was created by a company founded by Evan Williams, who would go on to co-found Twitter.

Blogging platforms have different approaches to porn and nudity. WordPress permits "mature content," but excludes it from public areas of the service and does not allow pornographic material such as "explicit sexual acts." Photo-heavy Tumblr, now a part of Yahoo, says "sexual or adult-oriented content" must be flagged as "Not Suitable for Work" and does not allow for the embedding of sexually explicit video. Medium, also founded by Evan Williams, says flat-out: "No porn." □



## UN says limit use of personal audio players to 1 hour a day

**FRANK JORDANS**  
Associated Press

**BERLIN (AP)** — People who use personal audio players should consider limiting their use to one hour a day and turn down the volume to prevent permanent hearing loss, the World Health Organization said Friday. The U.N. agency said young people are particularly at risk, with data from middle- and high-income countries showing that almost half of all 12- to 35-year-olds listen to their personal audio devices or cellphones at unsafe volumes. About 40 percent of young people are also exposed to damaging sound levels at nightclubs, bars and sporting events.

"As the intensity of sound increases, the permissible time for safe exposure

reduces," said Dr. Shelly Chadha, a WHO expert on hearing loss.

Volumes of 85 decibels — equivalent to being stuck in traffic — can be safely endured for up to eight hours, she said. But the safe exposure time halves with every three additional decibels, so volumes of 100 decibels are safe for only 15 minutes. "Teenagers and young people can better protect their hearing by keeping the volume down on personal audio devices, wearing earplugs when visiting noisy venues, and using carefully fitted, and, if possible, noise-cancelling earphones or headphones," WHO said, urging them to take short listening breaks and restrict the daily use of personal audio devices to less than one hour.

Chadha noted that many

people don't realize how loud the volume on their device is. She said someone who turns up the volume on his personal music player to 95 decibels for a 30-minute subway commute "is going to get irreversibly damaged (hearing) in a couple of years' time."

Chadha also said manufacturers should consider displaying the intensity level on devices.

As a general rule, "where you cannot understand conversation around you, you know that this is too loud," she said.

Some 360 million people worldwide live with disabling hearing loss caused by a variety of factors, including chronic infection, rubella and exposure to noise, according to WHO. □



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## Berkshire Hathaway's 4Q profit declines 17 percent

**JOSH FUNK**

**AP Business Writer**

**OMAHA, Nebraska (AP)** —

Berkshire Hathaway Inc. said Saturday that its fourth quarter profit slid 17 percent because of declines in the paper value of its investments and derivative contracts.

Berkshire's quarterly profit declined to \$4.16 billion, or \$2,529 per Class A share, on \$48.3 billion in revenue. That's down from \$4.99 billion, or \$3.035 per share, on \$47 billion in revenue.

The biggest factor was investment and derivative gains of \$192 million this quarter compared to \$1.2 billion in 2013.

Chairman and CEO Warren Buffett has said that Berkshire's operating earnings, which exclude investments and derivatives, are a better measure of its performance. Those were \$3.96 billion, or \$2,412 per share, which is up from \$3.78 billion, or \$2,297 per share.

The four analysts surveyed by FactSet expected operating earnings of \$2,655.09 per share, on average.

"I thought it was a good year, but not a great year," said Andy Kilpatrick, a retired stockbroker who wrote the book, "Of Permanent Value: The Story of Warren Buffett."

Most of Berkshire's 80-odd subsidiaries performed well last year with its utility and



**Billionaire investor Warren Buffett speaks in Omaha, Neb., at an event to raise money for the Girls Inc., charity organization. Warren Buffett's annual letter to Berkshire Hathaway shareholders is always one of the best-read business documents of the year. The 2015 letter, released on Saturday Feb. 28, marked the 50th year of Buffett's leadership.**

(AP Photo/Nati Harnik, File)

manufacturing businesses posting the biggest gains. Berkshire Hathaway Energy added \$1.88 billion net income in 2014 after it acquired Nevada utility NV Energy, up from \$1.47 billion in 2013.

Berkshire's manufacturing, service and retail businesses added \$4.5 billion to the conglomerate's profits, up from \$3.9 billion. Specialty chemical manufacturer Lubrizol and toolmaker Iscar

both had strong years. BNSF railroad struggled with service problems last year as a strong grain harvest combined with the surge in crude oil shipments clogged rail lines just as extreme cold weather took hold. BNSF still contributed nearly \$3.9 billion to Berkshire's earnings, up from \$3.8 billion in 2013. Buffett's preferred measure of Berkshire's performance is growth in book

value — its assets minus liabilities. Berkshire's book value gained 8.3 percent in 2014, but trailed the S&P 500's 13.7 percent gain. Berkshire underperformed that benchmark in five of the last six years and 11 out of the past 50 years.

Berkshire Hathaway Inc. owns roughly 80 subsidiaries, including insurance, utility, railroad, furniture and jewelry firms. The company also has major investments in Coca-Cola Co., IBM and Wells Fargo & Co. Buffett is proud of what he's built as Berkshire Hathaway's CEO over the past 50 years, but he's also willing to admit making a few costly mistakes along the way.

Buffett used his annual shareholder letter released Saturday to make the case for his conglomerate's future while also offering investing advice. Buffett dropped a few hints about his eventual successor, and though he didn't name names, another key executive did single out two people as strong executives highly capable of leading the company.

But no, the 84-year-old Buffett isn't retiring.

Here are some key themes from his annual report: Buffett said his eventual successor will need to be calm, rational and decisive, and he hopes that person will be young enough

to lead the company for at least a decade.

"My successor will need one other particular strength: the ability to fight off the ABCs of business decay, which are arrogance, bureaucracy and complacency," Buffett said. "When these corporate cancers metastasize, even the strongest of companies can falter."

Vice Chairman Charlie Munger added his own letter this year, and predicted that Berkshire will be fine once he and Buffett are gone because of the management talent it already has. Munger singled out reinsurance executive Ajit Jain and Berkshire Hathaway Energy CEO Greg Abel as two Berkshire executives who could succeed Buffett one day. Both have been noted on short lists made by investors and the media.

"In some important ways, each is a better business executive than Buffett," Munger said.

The company having mentioned specific names will only add to speculation about which Berkshire executives are on the short list to be the next CEO.

One of the best ways to build wealth over time is to own stocks, but Buffett said investors must avoid the common mistakes of trading too often and paying high investment fees. □

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## The Hamilton Experience



DAVID BROOKS  
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Every once in a while a piece of art brilliantly captures the glory, costs and ordeals of public life. Steven Spielberg's "Lincoln" did that. And so does Lin-Manuel Miranda's "Hamilton," now playing at The Public Theater in New York.

The Public Theater seems hell bent on putting drama back in the center of the national conversation, and Miranda's "Hamilton" is one of the most exhilarating experiences I've had in a theater. Each element in the show is a jewel, and the whole is bold, rousing, sexy, tear-jerking and historically respectful - the sort of production that strips things down and asks you to think afresh about your country and your life.

It is a hip-hop musical about a Founding Father. If that seems incongruous, it shouldn't. Like the quintessential contemporary rappers, Alexander Hamilton was a poor immigrant kid from a broken home, feverish to rise and broadcast his voice. He was verbally blessed, combative, hungry for fame and touchy about his reputation. Like Tupac Shakur and the Notorious B.I.G., he died in a clash of male bravado. The spirits of Tupac and Biggie waft through this musical; their genre the modern articulation of Hamilton's clever and cocky assertiveness.

The musical starts with the core fact about Hamilton and the strain of Americanism he represents: The relentless ambition of the outsider.

He was effectively an orphan on the island of Nevis in the Caribbean. His mother died in the bed next to him.

He was adopted by a cousin who committed suicide. Relentlessly efficient with his use of time and brilliant in the use of his pen, he made his name.

The musical reveals the dappled nature of that ambition. Hamilton is captivating and energetic - a history-making man who thinks he can remake himself and his country. But he is also haunted by a desperate sense that he is racing against time. He has a reckless, out-of-control quality. In the biography, "Alexander Hamilton," upon which the musical was based, Ron Chernow writes that Hamilton "always had to fight the residual sadness of the driven man." That haunting loneliness is in this show, too.

But Hamilton is not portrayed as ambition personified. The musical is structured around the rivalry between Hamilton and Aaron Burr, who is the crafty one, the utilitarian manipulator whose only ambition is to get inside the room where power is wielded. In real life and in the musical, Hamilton's ambition was redeemed by his romanticism. He was more Lord Byron than Horatio Alger. Hamilton was romantic about virtue and glory. As a boy he read Plutarch and had an archaic belief that death could be cheated by the person who wins eternal fame. He sought to establish himself as a man of honor, who would live on in the mouths of those whose esteem was worth having.

He was also romantic about his country. Miranda plays up Hamilton's connection to New York, but Hamilton actually dedicated his life to the cause of America. He sought redemption in a national mission, personal meaning in a glory that would be realized by generations to come.

He was also romantic about women, strong in his capacity for love. Hamilton communes with Angelica Schuyler, who is his intellectual equal. He marries her sister, Eliza Schuyler, who is not, but whose submerged strength comes out in adversity.

But the boldest stroke in Miranda's musical is that he takes on the whole life - every significant episode. He shows how the active life is inevitably an accumulation of battles, setbacks, bruises, scars, victories and humiliating defeats.

Hamilton's greatest foe, Thomas Jefferson, is portrayed brilliantly by the actor Daveed Diggs as a supremely gifted aristocrat who knows exactly how gifted he is. Hamilton assaulted Jefferson because he did not believe a country dominated by oligarchs could be a country in which poor boys and girls like him would have space to rise and grow.

By the time he set off for his fatal duel, Hamilton was a damaged man. But he left behind a vision, albeit one that sits uncomfortably across today's political divide. Unlike progressives, he believed in relatively unfettered finance and capitalism to arouse energy and increase social mobility. Unlike conservatives, he believed that government should actively subsidize mobility.

Unlike populists of left and right, he believed in an aristocracy, though one based on virtue and work, not birth.

He also left behind a spirit - the spirit of grand aspiration and national greatness. The cast at the Public Theater is mostly black and Latino, but it exudes the same strong ambition as this dead white man from centuries ago. America changes color and shape, but the spirit Hamilton helped bring to the country still lives. I suspect many people will leave the theater wondering if their own dreams and lives are bold enough, if their own lives could someday be so astounding. □



## Scientology's Chilling Effect



JOE NOCERA  
© 2015 New York Times

When I was at Fortune magazine in the 1990s, one of my colleagues was a reporter named Richard Behar. He had a special lock on his door, and he wouldn't even let the janitor in to empty his wastebasket. He used a secret phone, which he kept hidden in a desk drawer, so that calls made to sources couldn't be traced back to him.

At first, I just thought he was paranoid. But I soon learned that he had come by his paranoia honestly. In May 1991, as a correspondent for Time magazine, Behar had written an exposé of Scientology, calling it a "hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner."

Before the article was published, Behar says he was followed by private detectives, who also contacted acquaintances, asking whether he had financial problems. After its publication, that sort of harassment continued, he says - along with a major libel suit. Although the suit was eventually dismissed, it took years, and cost millions of dollars to defend. Behar's deposition alone lasted 28 days.

What brings this to mind is Alex Gibney's fine new HBO documentary about Scientology, "Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief," which is based on the book "Going

Clear" by Lawrence Wright. (Disclosure: I played a small role in Gibney's 2005 documentary on Enron.) "Going Clear," which was shown at Sundance in late January, is scheduled to air on HBO on March 29.

It is virtually impossible to tell the story of Scientology without getting into the issue of intimidation. As the film notes, going on the offensive against its critics is part of Scientology's doctrine, handed down by its founder, L. Ron Hubbard. "It is the antithesis of turn the other cheek," says Marty Rathbun, a former high-ranking official who left the church in 2004 and has since been subjected to Scientology harassment, as the film documents. It also retells the story, first reported in The New York Times, of how, in 1993, Scientology won a 25-year fight against the Internal Revenue Service, which had refused to grant it nonprofit status. Scientologists filed several thousand lawsuits, against not just the IRS but individual IRS officials, and hired private detectives to look for dirt and conduct surveillance operations.

But the film doesn't really tackle the intimidation of journalists. One of the first journalists to take on Scientology, in the early 1970s, was a young freelance writer named Paulette Cooper. Scientology's retaliation was astounding. It framed her for supposedly sending bomb threats to the church. The documents it forged were so convincing that she was indicted in 1973 and was fully exonerated only when the FBI, acting on a tip, raided Scientology offices and discovered the plot against her in 1977.

Over the course of the next three decades-plus, there were a handful - though only a handful - of tough-minded articles like Behar's. "Everybody who wrote about Scientology knew they were taking a risk," Wright told me. You've heard of the "chilling effect"? Scientology offered a prime example of how it works. Then, in 2009, The Tampa Bay Times (then The St. Petersburg

Times) published an important series about Scientology, based on interviews with high-ranking defectors, including Rathbun and Mike Rinder, who had been Scientology's top spokesman. The series was the first to suggest that Scientology had a longstanding culture of abuse. Amazingly, the church did not sue.

Vanity Fair published a big piece about Scientology. (This was after the breakup of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes; Cruise, of course, is the most famous Scientologist of them all.) No lawsuit. Anderson Cooper did a series on CNN. The BBC weighed in. Ditto and ditto. Sure enough, when I spoke to Wright and Gibney, they said that the pushback they had gotten was nothing they couldn't handle. A Scientology website has posted a video attacking the two men, and the church has also taken out full-page newspaper ads denouncing "Going Clear." "I didn't expect quite this much venom," Gibney told me, but, he added, "I regard it as good publicity."

(In a lengthy statement, a Scientology spokesperson said Gibney had "lied to us repeatedly," that Marty Rathbun had "destroyed evidence and lied under oath," that a judge had described Behar as "biased," and that in defending itself against Gibney's "propaganda and bigotry," it was speaking "for those who are subjected to religious persecution and hatred.") Gibney also noted that the people who are really harassed these days aren't journalists but those who have left the church, like Rathbun, who told me that, with more people leaving and talking about the church, it no longer has the resources to sic private eyes on all its critics. He also thinks the Internet has hurt the church, because it is far easier to find out information about it - and many of its supposed secrets are posted online for all to see.

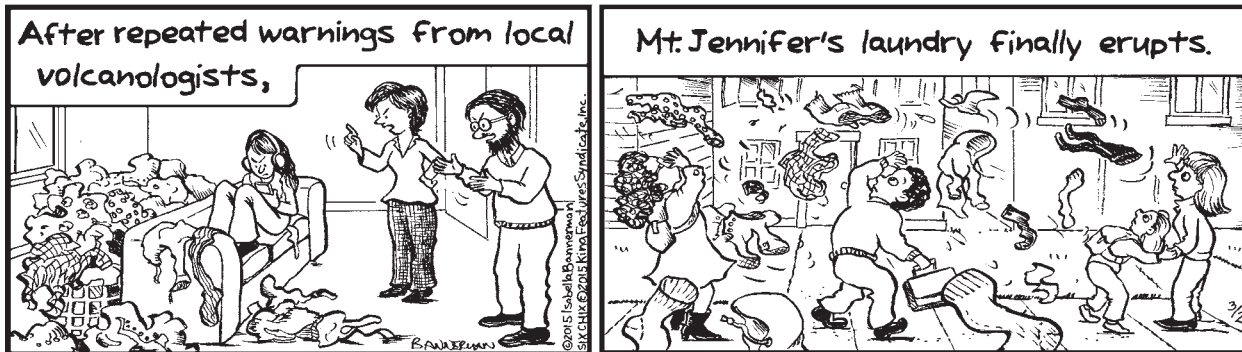
"Part of the message here is that you don't need to fear Scientology anymore," Wright says. It's long overdue. □



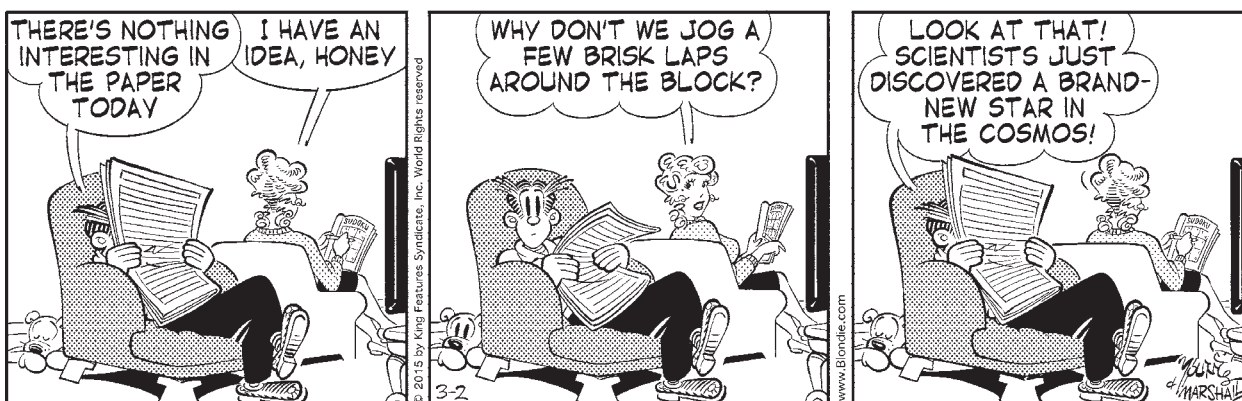
**Mutts**



**6 Chix**



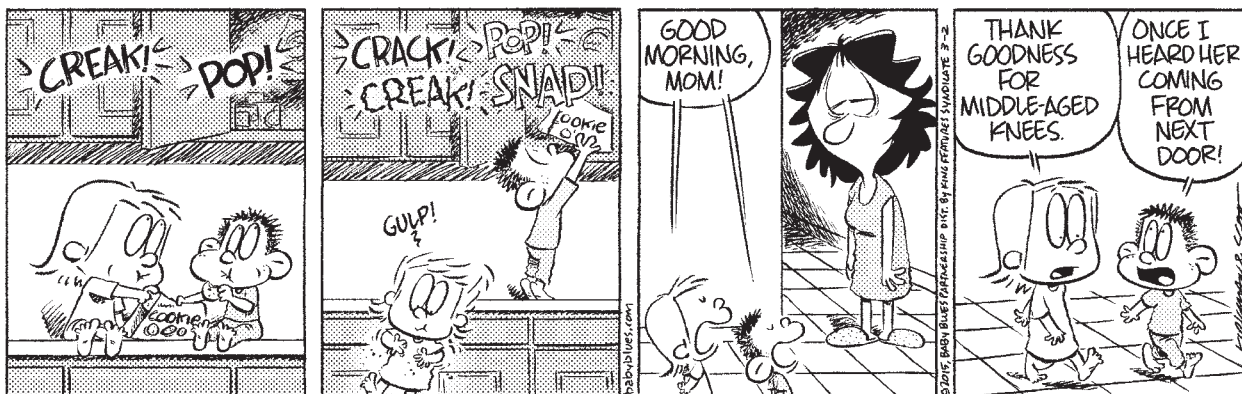
**Blondie**



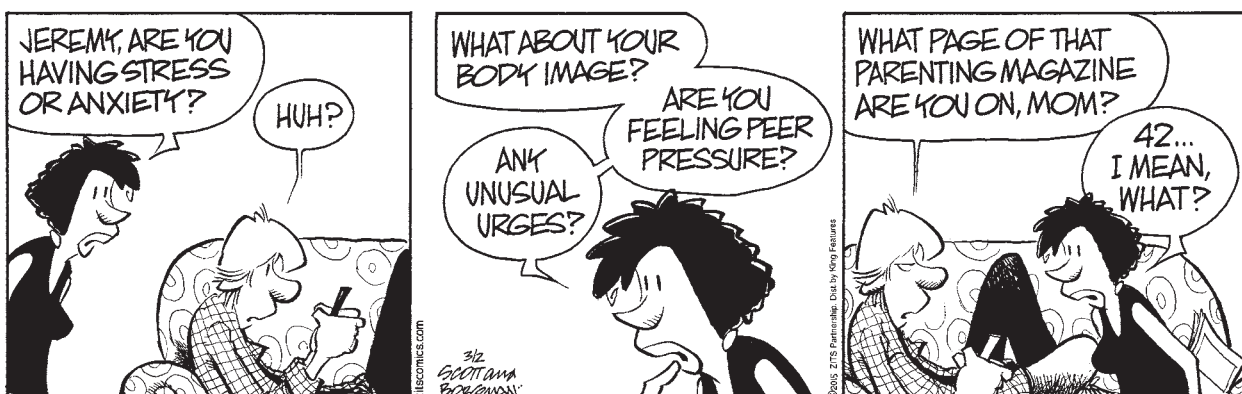
**Mother Goose & Grimm**



**Baby Blues**



**Zits**



**Conceptis Sudoku**

	7	3			2			
4	6				7	2		
5			8				9	
		5		7	9		3	1
2	8		6	1		9		
	5				8			6
		2	3				5	4
			4			3	8	

Difficulty Level ★

3/02

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Saturday's puzzle answer

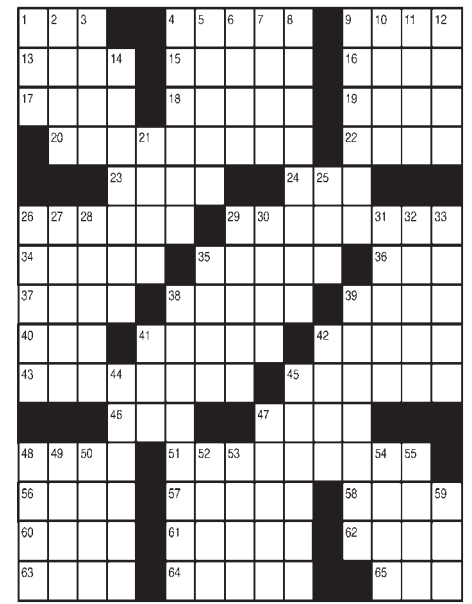
2	5	6	1	3	4	8	7	9
7	1	3	8	9	5	4	6	2
4	8	9	7	6	2	1	3	5
5	2	8	9	7	3	6	1	4
6	4	7	2	5	1	3	9	8
9	3	1	4	8	6	5	2	7
1	7	4	3	2	8	9	5	6
8	6	2	5	1	9	7	4	3
3	9	5	6	4	7	2	8	1

**ACROSS**

- 1 J. Edgar Hoover's agcy.
- 4 Banana \_\_; ice cream treat
- 9 Pitfall
- 13 Cereal grains
- 15 By oneself
- 16 Donut center
- 17 Apiece
- 18 Israelites' bread from heaven
- 19 Lawn trees
- 20 Requirement for a good knife
- 22 Campaign goal
- 23 5,280 feet
- 24 Fraternity letter
- 26 Conflict; battle
- 29 Very big bill
- 34 Dried plum
- 35 Faint
- 36 Female deer
- 37 Peeled
- 38 Rule as king
- 39 Roaring beast
- 40 Actress \_\_ MacGraw
- 41 Ways and \_\_ committee
- 42 Reserves, as a room
- 43 Substantially real; capable of being touched
- 45 Cool dessert for Bullwinkle?
- 46 \_\_ de cologne
- 47 No longer outstanding
- 48 Long dress
- 51 Egghead
- 56 "Cat on \_\_ Tin Roof"
- 57 Faithful
- 58 Dirt
- 60 "It's a \_\_!"; new parents' cry
- 61 Waltz or twist
- 62 Pine or banyan
- 63 Partial amount
- 64 Simple ghost costume
- 65 HST's follower

**DOWN**

- 1 Enemy
- 2 Pasture cries



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

3/2/15

**Saturday's Puzzle Solved**

SOBS	GRABS	HULA
UGLY	HELEN	ATOP
DRUM	ASIDE	TAPE
SERPENT	BEACHES	
TEA	LURCH	
ERROR	NAG	HEALS
REAM	EBB	PETROL
ABC	ENCORES	DOA
SEEMED	RIG	TOMS
ELDER	FED	HARSH
MAILED	FIB	
MISDEAL	POTABLE	
ECHO	CIGAR	SLAY
MEOW	ENACT	CONE
ODES	SELES	OWED

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3/2/15

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 33 Thickheaded    | 47 Tranquility    |
| 35 Make airtight  | 48 Chokes         |
| 38 Constructs     | 49 Sandusky, __   |
|                   | 50 Garden crawler |
| 39 Most deafening | 52 Actor Wyle     |
| 41 Farrow or Sara | 53 Actress Daly   |
| 42 Sore as a __   | 54 Drape puller   |
| 44 Tender; mellow | 55 __ up; bound   |
| 45 Croquet stick  | 59 Gypsy Rose __  |



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## Spacewalking astronauts finish extensive, tricky cable job

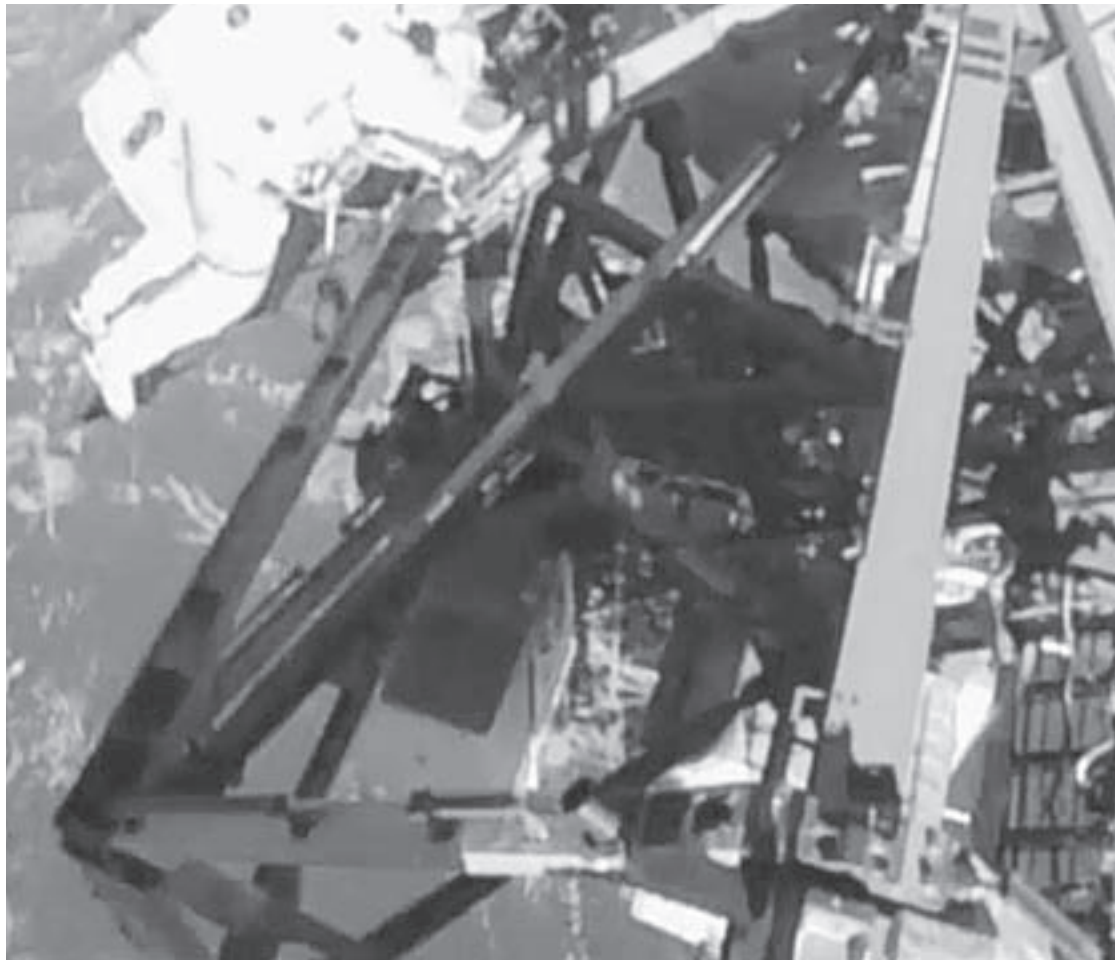
MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer  
CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida  
(AP) — Spacewalking as-

tronauts successfully completed a three-day cable job outside the International Space Station on Sunday, routing several-hundred feet of power and data lines for new crew capsules commissioned by NASA.

It was the third spacewalk in just over a week for Americans Terry Virts and Butch Wilmore, and the quickest succession of spacewalks since NASA's former shuttle days.

The advance work was needed for the manned spacecraft under development by Boeing and SpaceX. A pair of docking ports will fly up later this year, followed by the capsules themselves, with astronauts aboard, in 2017. Once safely back inside, Virts reported a bit of water in his helmet again for the second time in as many spacewalks. He stressed it was "not a big deal" and said there was no need to



In this image from NASA television astronaut Terry Virts is seen during the third spacewalk outside the International Space Station Sunday March 1, 2015.

Associated Press

hurry out of his suit. Virts and Wilmore installed two sets of antennas Sun-

day, as well as 400 feet (122 meters) of cable for this new communication system. They unreeled 364 feet (111 meters) of cable on Feb. 21 and last Wednesday.

It was complicated, hand-intensive work, yet the astronauts managed to wrap up more than an hour early Sunday, for a 5 1/2-hour spacewalk. Their three outings spanned 19 hours.

"You guys have done an outstanding job," Mission Control radioed, "even for two shuttle pilots."

Sunday's 260-mile (418-kilometer)-high action unfolded 50 years to the month of the world's first spacewalk.

Soviet Alexei Leonov floated out into the vacuum of space on March 18, 1965, beating America's first

spacewalker, Gemini 4's Edward White II, by just 2 1/2 months. Leonov is now 80; White died in the Apollo 1 fire on the launch pad in 1967.

"It's amazing ... to see how far we've come from the very first steps outside," Virts said.

On Sunday — just like Wednesday — a little water got into Virts' helmet once he was back in the air lock and the chamber was being repressurized.

Virts said it seemed to be about the same amount of water, maybe slightly more, but dried quickly. He didn't need any towels this time when his helmet came off.

"I couldn't feel it on my skin. I could just see the thin film on the visor," he told Mission Control.

Engineers concluded last week it was the result of condensation during the repressurization of the air lock, and a safe and well understood circumstance that had occurred several times before with the same spacesuit.

Virts was never in danger either day, according to NASA, and no water leaked into his helmet while he was outdoors.

Wilmore's much newer suit functioned perfectly during the first two spacewalks, but on Sunday morning, a pressure sensor briefly malfunctioned before he floated out. A mechanical gauge, however, was operating fine. Mission Control instructed Wilmore to pay extra attention to how his suit was feeling.

Wilmore is due to return to Earth next week following a 5 1/2-month mission. Virts is midway through his expedition. Russian Soyuz spacecraft carried them both up, with NASA paying for the multimillion-dollar rides.

To save money and stop being so reliant on the Russian Space Agency, NASA has hired Boeing and SpaceX to develop spacecraft capable of transporting astronauts to the space station. The two contracts are worth nearly \$7 billion. SpaceX already is delivering cargo under a separate agreement with NASA.

NASA expects to buy Russian Soyuz seats for its astronauts through 2018 in case the two companies miss their promised 2017 launch deadline.

As many as four more U.S. spacewalks will be conducted this year — beginning this summer — to make way for the Boeing and SpaceX capsules. □

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## Will Smith's 'Focus' tops box office with \$19.1 million

**JAKE COYLE**  
AP Film Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Will Smith's con-man caper "Focus" disrobed "Fifty Shades of Grey" at the box office, but the film's modest \$19.1 million opening still left questions about the drawing power of the once unstoppable star.

According to studio estimates Sunday, Warner Bros.' "Focus" easily topped all competitors on a weekend with little competition at North American multiplexes. In second place was the Colin Firth spy thriller "Kingsman: The Secret Service," which made \$11.8 million in its third week of release.

After two weeks atop the box office, "Fifty Shades of Grey" continued its steep slide, landing in fourth with an estimated \$10.9 million for Universal Pictures. "Fifty Shades," which has made \$486.2 million globally, fell just behind Paramount's "The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out of Water," which earned \$11.2 million in its fourth week.

The weekend's only other new wide release, Relativity's horror film "The Lazarus Effect," opened in fifth place with \$10.6 million.

But the weekend was largely seen, fairly or not, as a referendum on Smith's star power. "Focus," written and directed by the "Crazy, Stupid, Love" duo Glenn Ficarra and John Requa, is Smith's first film since 2013's "After Earth," the science-fiction flop in which he co-starred with



In this image released by Warner Bros. Pictures, Will Smith, center, and Margot Robbie, right, appear in a scene from the film, "Focus."

his son, Jaden.

Smith has been frank about the sting of that film's box-office performance. "I can't allow the box-office success, or lack thereof, to determine my self-image," he said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. But "Focus," made for about \$50 million and co-starring Margot Robbie of "The Wolf of Wall Street," was never intended to be a summer-sized blockbuster. It had been predicted to make around \$21 million. "This is a mid-budgeted film with a result that matches,"

said Jeff Goldstein, head of distribution for Warner Bros., who added that winter storms accounted for a drop of \$1-2 million. "There's no question we got hammered because of inclement weather in the South and the Midwest."

The R-rated "Focus," overwhelmingly appealed to adults, with 88 percent of its audience older than 25 — not a good sign for Smith's appeal to a new generation of moviegoers who weren't around for his triumphs in "Independence Day." Nevertheless,

there aren't many stars who could do better with a drama in late February. And "Focus" should play well internationally, where Smith's popularity remains strong. "This still goes on his balance sheet as a number one debut," said Paul Degarabedian, senior media analyst for box-office data firm Rentrak. "He can still draw an audience, particularly with a film that's R-rated and not aimed at the young crowd."

Some of last Sunday's Oscar winners saw slight bumps at the box office.

Best-picture winner "Birdman (Or the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)" added some 800 screens to bring in \$2 million over the weekend, pushing its total past \$40 million. "Still Alice," for which Julianne Moore won best actress, added 553 screens and earned \$2.7 million. It's now made \$12 million for Sony Pictures Classics.

"American Sniper," far and away the biggest box-office hit of the best-picture nominees, was also easily the top post-Oscars draw. □

Associated Press



## Lady Gaga, Vince Vaughn take charity polar plunge in Chicago

**CHICAGO (AP)** — Lady Gaga and Vince Vaughn made plunges into the icy waters of Chicago's Lake Michigan at a fundraiser for the Special Olympics. Special Olympics Chicago President Casey Hogan said Sunday that Gaga did the plunge with more than 4,500 other participants. Hogan says the singer's appearance was "a very nice surprise."

Gaga recently announced her engagement to "Chicago Fire" actor Taylor Kinney. Photos show her and a bare-chested Kinney going into the water together. Vaughn also made the plunge. The native of the Chicago suburb Lake Forest was dressed in his Chicago Blackhawks jersey and jeans. The actor went in up to his



**Actor Vince Vaughn, center left, and Special Olympics Chicago President Casey Hogan take part in the Chicago Polar Plunge at North Avenue Beach on Sunday, March 1, 2015 in Chicago.**  
Associated Press

knees, then eased himself down backward in the water.

Last year comedian Jimmy Fallon jumped in wearing a suit and tie, and helped

raise more than \$1 million. The air temperature was a frigid 20 degrees at the time of the plunge, according to the National Weather Service. □

## Harrison Ford to reprise role in 'Blade Runner' seque



**In this Aug. 11, 2014 file photo, Harrison Ford arrives at the premiere of "The Expendables 3" at TCL Chinese Theatre in Los Angeles.**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Harrison Ford is set to reprise his role as Rick Deckard in a sequel to the dystopian, neo-noir "Blade Runner," more than 31 years after

the film first premiered. Ridley Scott directed the 1982 movie, which was adapted from the Philip K. Dick novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep." Alcon Entertainment announced Ford's role Thursday and said Scott will serve as an executive producer on the sequel. Production on the film will begin in the summer of 2016. Hampton Fancher, who co-wrote the original, and Michael Green have written a script based on an idea from Fancher and Scott. The story will take place several decades after the events at the conclusion of the 1982 film. A director has not yet been confirmed for the project. □

## Dress that 'greatly resembles' stolen Nyong'o gown found

**TAMI ABDOLLAH**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — A white dress that strongly resembles the custom gown taken from Lupita Nyong'o's hotel room earlier this week turned up Friday under a bathroom sink in the same hotel, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's official said.

The dress found at a West Hollywood hotel "greatly resembles" the pearl-adorned Calvin Klein Collection by Francisco Costa dress the actress wore to Sunday's Academy Awards, sheriff's spokeswoman Nicole Nishida said. Detectives were trying to verify whether the recovered dress is the same one Nyong'o wore, she said. One of the actress' representatives reported the dress was stolen from her room at the London Hotel late Wednesday. Authorities placed its value at \$150,000, although experts say it could have fetched more on the black market.



**In this Sunday, Feb. 22, 2015 file photo, Lupita Nyong'o arrives at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.**  
Associated Press

Women's Wear Daily reported that the dress was made of 6,000 crystal pearls on silk lame and that its value was undetermined.

In a statement to Women's Wear Daily, Costa said everyone at Calvin Klein was thrilled to learn that the dress may have been found.

"Once it's returned to us, we will be able to have the dress restored and archived, as it now represents

an important moment for the brand," Costa said in his statement.

The recovery of the dress was first reported by TMZ.com, which said that a person claiming to have taken the gown gave the celebrity website information about where to find the dress.

Detectives found it in a black garment bag stashed underneath the bathroom counter. □

## Biopic of martial arts legend Bruce Lee springs into action



**In this Nov. 24, 2014 file photo, Shannon Lee, daughter of Bruce Lee and president of the "Bruce Lee Foundation," poses for photographers during a press conference launching instant drinks in her father's name in Hong Kong.**  
Associated Press

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Legendary martial arts star Bruce Lee is getting the official biopic treatment, daughter Shannon Lee announced Friday. Despite his untimely death in 1973 at age 32, Bruce Lee helped to create and popularize a genre that still endures and influences today with roles in films including "Fist of Fury," "Way of the Drag-

on," and "Enter the Dragon."

Bruce Lee Entertainment will produce the project in collaboration with Lawrence Grey ("Hope Springs") and Janet Yang ("The Joy Luck Club"). In the statement, Shannon Lee said the film will explore her father's writings, art and philosophies in addition to his martial arts stardom. □



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